



## EPISODE 2x18: "MOMENT OF SILENCE"

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## Teaser

### **EXT. HAVEN – DAWN**

SERENITY approaches the dusty moon.

### **INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE**

WASH and BEN are on the bridge.

BEN

I can't wait to get home and unpack. I just don't know  
how you and the others can—

Throughout this, Wash has been looking at his console, increasingly concerned.

WASH

Hold that thought, Ben.

(into com)

Mal, you better get up here. Something's—

MAL, apparently right in the hallway, walks onto the bridge, startles Wash.

MAL

What's the tumult?

Wash and Mal realize that Ben is staring out the forward viewport and they look, too.

BEN

Oh, God.

### **EXT. HAVEN – DAY**

Serenity swings around a mountain to come into view of the camp.

It is a world of fire.

Every building burns, some blown right apart. Bodies litter the scene, not one of them moving.

There's a grounded ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT, its engine core a pile of slag beneath it, not far from "THE BIG STICK," the mounted cannon that protects Haven.

## **INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME**

Mal's face tightens as the sight hits him like a gut-punch.

## **EXT. SERENITY – MOMENTS LATER**

The crew pours out even as the ramp lowers. ZOE and JAYNE are off first, checking the perimeter, armed with the mare's-leg and Vera, respectively. RIVER moves slowly, scanning, taking everything in.

KAYLEE pauses at the bottom of the ramp, SIMON and Ben not far behind her.

For a brief moment, the crew is stunned into silence. The only sound is the crackle of distant fires. Then Kaylee takes a disoriented step forward.

KAYLEE

Shepherd! Shepherd Book! Hiroku!

BEN

Bern! Millie!

(shaken, uncomprehending)

Why would... anyone...?

Further back, Mal and INARA:

INARA

My God.

MAL

God didn't have no hand in this.

The crew starts to drift off in different directions, calling out names.

MAL (cont'd)

(to Zoe)

Whatever did this could still be here. Don't let nobody go too far.

He rushes off.

## **EXT. HAVEN – NEAR THE BIG STICK – MOMENTS LATER**

Mal walks through the devastation, Jayne tagging along not far behind. Jayne stops to prod one of the bodies with his gunstock, looking for a spark of life. Finds none.

They continue toward "the big stick." When they're a few yards away, Jayne recognizes one of the bodies. He rushes forward and crouches by it: it's DEREK.

Mal takes a few more steps, then stops and sees:

SHEPHERD BOOK, lying by the cannon, bloodied and torn up badly from the waist down. He is still breathing. Barely.

MAL  
(to Jayne)  
Get the Doc!

Jayne is off and running before Mal's command is complete.

Mal moves to the Shepherd, kneels down beside him, grabs his searching hand.

MAL  
Shepherd... Don't move.

BOOK  
(weakly)  
Won't go far...

MAL  
Shouldn't've been you. I'm so sorry, it was... They  
should've hit us. They should've hit me.

BOOK  
(barely able to get it out)  
That... crossed my mind.  
(coughs)  
I shot him down—

MAL  
I seen.

BOOK  
I killed the ship... that killed us. Not... very Christian of  
me.

MAL  
I seem to recollect the phrase 'an eye for an eye' comin'  
from your good book.

He tightens his grip on Book's hand.

MAL (cont'd)  
You did what's right.

BOOK  
(not unkindly)  
Coming from you, that means... almost nothing...

(suddenly winces)  
HNAAH! Ah, I'm long gone...

MAL  
Doc'll bring you round. I look to be bored by many more  
sermons 'fore you slip—don't move—

BOOK  
Can't... order me around, boy. I'm not one of your crew.

MAL  
(grips tightly; near tears)  
Yes you are.

Book coughs up blood, grabbing Mal. Urgent, almost angry.

BOOK  
You... It's on you now... All of this death, this *gos se*... you  
have to find a course. This can't mean nothing. River...  
You have to...

MAL  
Come on, keep it up—  
(shouts)  
COME ON! WHERE'S THE D—!?

Book grabs Mal's face, talks as though replying to something:

BOOK  
I don't care what you believe! Just... believe it. Whatever  
you have to...

His breathing becomes labored.

Hitched.

Stopped.

His hand slips away, his blood leaving a distinctive print on Mal's face.

In the background, Jayne and Simon run up, Simon slowing down—going to the  
Shepherd.

Simon and Jayne are both yelling as Simon works on Book, but we can't hear the  
words. All sound FADES OUT. Silence.

Everything is out of focus except for Mal, blood on his face, staring down at Book,  
still holding his hand.

## Act One

### EXT. HAVEN – NEAR THE BIG STICK – MOMENTS LATER

Everyone gathers around.

Mal still holds Book's hand as Simon leans back. Kaylee sees Shepherd Book for the first time, and covers her mouth with her hand.

KAYLEE  
Shepherd!?

Simon stands.

KAYLEE (cont'd)  
(voice breaking)  
Shepherd Book...

Simon goes to her and takes hold of her.

No one says anything.

Wash and Zoe move closer, their hands barely touching.

Inara moves forward and puts a hand on Mal's shoulder, but he doesn't react.

River drops to the ground, sitting in the dirt tailor-style.

Jayne edges forward, restless, trying to get closer to Book, almost bumping into Mal. Still no reaction from the Captain.

Then...

WASH  
Where's Ben?

This focuses some of the crew.

ZOE  
Jayne.

Jayne's still looking down at Book.

ZOE (cont'd)  
Jayne! Go and find him!

Jayne's head snaps up, but that's all.

ZOE (cont'd)

Now!

Jayne gives a reluctant little nod and trots off.

Zoe looks at the rest of the shell-shocked crowd.

ZOE (cont'd)

Doctor, you're with me.

KAYLEE

(looking at Book)

What about—

ZOE

Doctor, you're with me. There could be survivors.

SIMON

(beat; can't process)

Right.

He breaks away from Kaylee a little, but holds her hand and brings her with him. Wash also joins Zoe as she and Simon begin to move away.

ZOE

(to Inara)

Stay here or head back to the ship. It ain't safe to go wanderin'.

Inara glances at River and Mal, then nods to Zoe.

Then, with Kaylee giving a final backward look to Book's body, Zoe, Wash, Simon, and Kaylee move off.

Inara sits down next to Mal in the dirt and blood. Still no reaction.

She puts a hand on his shoulder. He doesn't acknowledge her at all.

He just stares into nowhere.

## **EXT. HAVEN – NEAR THE CHURCH**

Jayne looks disoriented. Bodies litter the area surrounding him.

JAYNE'S POV: FAST SWINGING PANS LEFT AND RIGHT – everything is a blur.

He picks his way through the carnage, as if being pushed by an unseen force through the remains of a smoldering home as he looks around.

No Ben.

No one.

He's alone. And he doesn't like it.

He spots the CHURCH a little ways away. The building appears to be the only one that's still intact in all of Haven.

Vera at the ready, Jayne moves toward the church. Although the church appears pristine, the path is littered with RUBBLE and BODIES.

Jayne begins to step over the bodies, but trips over one of them. He looks down to see—

—the corpse of Sissy Tempkin, a few months pregnant, staring up at him. Jayne looks a little queasy—

But before he has time to throw up, there's a MUFFLED CRASH from inside the church.

#### **EXT. HAVEN – MAIN STREET**

More rubble and the dead.

Zoe, in full-on military mode, leads the others. Kaylee, almost in shock, slows them down.

KAYLEE  
(panic; loud)  
Survivors? Where d'you figure the survivors are?

Simon has no answers.

ZOE  
(quietly)  
*Chen ji* <Quiet>. We don't know why they did this or if they're still here. Best we see what we can find and be gone quick as we can.

KAYLEE  
(harsh whisper; losing it)  
We're gonna find 'em, right? Bernabe and Millie? 'Roku. They gotta be fine.

WASH  
(gently)  
We should check the mines. That's the evac plan.

The group is now knotting up. They stop walking altogether, each looking around in different directions. Zoe turns back to look at the others in frustration.

KAYLEE

(nodding; in shock)

They're probably just hidin' there. Maybe some of 'em're hurt. Simon'll be able to help out.

She looks at Simon hopefully. He doesn't know what to say for a long, uncomfortable beat, until:

ZOE

More like than not, the only man can help 'em now is lyin' dead back at the big stick! Now move it!

Before any of them can react, Zoe storms off towards the mines.

#### **EXT. HAVEN – NEAR THE BIG STICK**

Inara and Mal are still in the dirt next to Book's body. Mal's still not looking away.

They sit for a silent beat. Another.

Inara tries again to take Mal by the shoulder.

INARA

There was nothing you could do, Mal. It's...

(to herself)

I should have known he was capable of this. He as much as said...

Mal shrugs her hand off his shoulder forcefully, still not saying a word, not looking away from Book.

Another long silence.

Inara doesn't know what to do; say.

INARA (cont'd)

(hint of desperation)

We need to move on, Mal. There's no reason to think we're not in danger. Even if they're not still here, they'll be back. We need to—

RIVER (OS)

Not listening.

River has come closer and stands over them.

RIVER (cont'd)  
Can't hear over the music.

She sways a little, dancing to music only she can hear. Creepy.

RIVER (cont'd)  
Dancer on the precipice. Standing on the razor. One little  
push and he'll be gone. Gone like all the rest—

INARA  
Stop it!

Inara jumps to her feet, grabbing River, stopping her dancing, shaking her hard.  
River takes it like a rag doll.

RIVER  
Falling down, hollow and empty—

INARA  
STOP IT!

RIVER  
Can't come back. Won't come—

Inara SLAPS her HARD. The sound of the slap becomes—

### **INT. HAVEN – CHURCH**

—the sound of Jayne kicking the doors inward as he charges into the church, Vera held ready.

Ben is in the church, so enraged that he doesn't notice Jayne. He swings a heavy CANDLESTICK, smashing it repeatedly against the wall, making jagged gashes in the plasterboard.

Jayne shoulders Vera, crosses his arms, and watches.

Hicks turns away from the wall and starts to hammer the nearest pew. A few wood chips fly, but on the third smack, the candlestick jerks out of Ben's hand.

With a frustrated growl, Ben grabs for the fallen candlestick, but it rolls away. He chases it, and it would be laughable if it weren't so sad.

He snatches up the candlestick and flings it at one of the windows on the far side of the room. His aim is ludicrously, painfully bad, and it thuds against the wall, more than a yard off-target.

Seething, Ben rushes across the room after it—

Jayne clothesline's him, knocking him to the floor.

JAYNE  
Hicks, you need to—

Ben charges him.

Jayne sighs and keeps him at bay as easily as if he were a child. Ben's rage burns out as Jayne slaps away his hands, and Ben collapses toward Jayne, sobbing.

### **EXT. HAVEN – MAIN STREET**

Simon and Kaylee meander through the smoldering wreckage.

KAYLEE  
So many... Everyone's...  
(it finally hits her)  
...dead.

Simon stops, turns, looks at her. But is unable to respond.

KAYLEE (cont'd)  
(denial; almost manic)  
Can't be. Wash an' Zoe'll find everyone.

Simon nods, absently agreeing with her. He wanders off a bit, lost in his own thoughts.

KAYLEE (cont'd)  
They're hiding up at the mines, like they're s'posed to.

Something catches Simon's eye. He gives Kaylee a "Wait here" motion and takes a few steps off.

KAYLEE (cont'd)  
(loud and very fast)  
You'll see. They're hidin' probably waitin' for us to get  
here they know the Captain and Zoe'll set things straight  
fix it right up for everyone...

Simon stops suddenly and crouches down. Behind him, Kaylee moves around feverishly, talking to herself more than to Simon.

KAYLEE (cont'd)  
We'll load everyone up an' skin out we'll set up... We'll set  
up tents in the cargo bay...  
(looking at Simon)  
What is it? What's wrong?

Simon stands slowly.

SIMON

It's... nothing. Don't come over here, Kaylee.

He takes a step in her direction, but she rushes forward to see. He tries to grab her, to stop her, but he's too slow. He grabs her shoulder as she sees what Simon was looking at:

Little HIROKU's body, half-buried under some fire-blackened pieces of wood.

KAYLEE

Oh...

She not so much kneels as collapses next to the little boy's body and cries. She buries her head in Hiroku's shoulder, clutching him.

KAYLEE (cont'd)

(louder and louder)

No. No no no no NO NO **NO NO!**

SIMON

Kaylee...

KAYLEE (cont'd)

(mantra-like)

NO! NO! Oh God NO! Please God NO! NO!

Simon stands by, helpless. She sobs and sobs for a long while.

Longer.

Simon eventually kneels and puts a hand on her shoulder.

SIMON

This...

(not knowing what to say)

...isn't your fault.

KAYLEE

You're right, it ain't.

She looks up, eyes wet. Angry.

KAYLEE (cont'd)

It's the Captain's.

## **EXT. HAVEN – NEAR THE BIG STICK**

Mal sits, still unmoving. River and Inara stand over him. Inara looks horrified.

INARA  
River, honey... I'm so sorry.

RIVER  
No.

River takes a step toward Inara. She smiles maniacally, unnaturally.

RIVER (cont'd)  
You're not.

INARA  
Yes, I—

Inara takes a nervous step back.

RIVER  
Scurry scurry. You're scared. All rats and mice inside.  
Don't want to be next.

Inara almost trips as she backs away.

RIVER (cont'd)  
Shared secrets with him. Not all, but enough.  
(realization; accusation)  
He made you cry. He made you love.

Inara looks away... then looks at Mal. Then back up at River.

INARA  
(whispers)  
Please stop.

## **INT. HAVEN – CHURCH**

Jayne backs away from Ben, patting him on the back awkwardly.

JAYNE  
You're, uh... You're gonna be...

His words trail off as he realizes the stupidity of what he's saying.

BEN  
Sorry... I...

Jayne gives him a "Whatever" look and walks away, looking around.

BEN (cont'd)

I just... I saw the church and I figured there'd be... Then I got here.

(long beat)

And seen it was empty.

Jayne spots Shepherd Book's BIBLE at the LECTERN and head to the front of the church.

BEN (cont'd)

They're all...

(can't bring himself to say it)

Ain't they?

JAYNE

(emotionless)

Prob'ly.

BEN

(desperation)

Why!?

JAYNE

(over his shoulder)

Does it matter?

Jayne's at the lectern and picks up the Bible. He walks back over to Ben, who's just standing there.

JAYNE (cont'd)

Go an' pack a bag if you got one left to pack. You're with us now.

He pockets the Bible.

JAYNE (cont'd)

I'm gonna see if I can find anything... valuable.

He looks at the OFFERTORY BOXES flanking the entrance.

## **EXT. HAVEN – MINE ENTRANCE**

Things are worse here. The mines took a direct hit and blew out, and the area is littered with wood and shattered stone.

And body parts.

Zoe walks through the smoke, carefully stepping over bodies, carrying a CORPSE.

Wash steps through the smoke, joining her, looking at the burnt and deformed corpse. Barely recognizable, it was once BERNABE. The look on Wash's face is heartbreaking.

ZOE

All our friends...

Wash doesn't say anything. He can't. He just moves into step beside her, helping her carry Bernabe.

ZOE (cont'd)

(realizing)

We could have been here.... We should have been... This was supposed to be our home.

Silence for a few moments, except for their breathing, as they carry Bernabe. Zoe selects a spot very close to the outer wall of the mine, and they put him down.

Wash looks down and sees that they've placed Bernabe right next to MILLIE. The upper half of her body is surprisingly intact, but the lower half is... gone. The bodies of her TWO CHILDREN are nearby.

Zoe and Wash stand over them in silence, possibly praying. Then:

ZOE (cont'd)

I can't do it any more, Wash. I'm... I'm too far gone.

He looks at her. She won't make eye contact; turns her face to the wall. She starts to break down, her words interrupted by huge, heaving sobs.

ZOE (cont'd)

There's too much death, and we're on the edge all the time. I can't do it any more. I got nothin' left. The Captain, you, this... It's all...

She leans into the wall, practically collapsing into it.

ZOE (cont'd)

Too much...

Without a word, Wash goes to her and gently turns her around, puts a comforting hand to her cheek. She leans into him, seeking support, and the comforting hand becomes something else...

A caress.



She looks up, and Wash kisses her.

A confused beat, and then she kisses him back.

Wash kisses her stronger, HARDER. He pushes her back against the stone.

And then their hands are all over each other. Touching, holding, seeking, tugging at clothes with a desperation that says "We're still alive, but who knows when it could all end?"

#### **EXT. HAVEN – NEAR THE BIG STICK**

CLOSE IN: On Mal and Book. From Mal's lack of motion, he might as well be dead, too.

RIVER (OS)  
Mommy? Mommy where are you!?

PULL BACK: To include River and Inara. River sits near one of the bodies—a little girl. Stroking the girl's cheek.

RIVER (cont'd)  
(panic, rapid breathing)  
MOMMY!? Daddy isn't moving. He's bleeding Mommy!  
He's... So much blood, Mommy! Momm—  
(screams)  
EEEEEEEEEEEEAAAAAAAAGH!

The screaming ends, and River begins to braid the girl's hair.

Inara stands a good distance off, arms wrapped around herself, watching River, disturbed.

IN TIME LAPSE: The others join them—

—First, Ben, who looks around furtively, a large duffel bag over his shoulder.

—Jayne has an offertory box under each arm. He puts them on the ground and crouches next to them.

—Kaylee and Simon appear, standing near River, looking down at her. Simon has his arm awkwardly around Kaylee's shoulders. Kaylee looks numb.

—Finally, Wash and Zoe join the rest, standing near one another, hands touching, but looking in opposite directions.

They all stand, mostly isolated from one another.

Then Jayne breaks the silence.

JAYNE

How come they ain't waiting? They know'd we was coming, how come they only sent one?

Mal doesn't look up.

MAL

They didn't know.

Now, he looks up. His long moment of inactivity is done.

MAL (cont'd)

He knew I'd run somewhere, but he couldn't know it'd be here.

He stands, full of urgency, looking at Zoe and Wash.

MAL (cont'd)

Get on the Cortex. Wave Dresden, the Sanchez brothers, Li Chen—anyone who ever sheltered us after a heist. Tell them to get out! Get out now!

## Act Two

### **INT. ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT – BRIDGE**

CLOSE IN: On a CLOSED EYE. In the background, we hear the insistent BEEP-BEEP-BEEP of a computer demanding attention.

The eye opens slowly. BEEP-BEEP-BEEP.

PULL BACK from the eye and see that it belongs to CAPTAIN WALLACE, who appears to be lying at an odd angle, leaning down toward the camera.

Pulling further back, we can see why: the entire bridge is tilted at an angle a bit steeper than forty-five degrees, the nose of the vessel planted in the ground. Wallace is caught on a COMPUTER CONSOLE, which appears to be the only thing preventing him from falling down toward the cracked forward viewport.

BEEP-BEEP-BEEP.

A console to the side is smoking, and the OFFICER seated at it—stuck in his seat, really—seems to have been electrocuted. The rest of the bridge crew has been smashed against the forward viewport.

BEEP-BEEP-BEEP.

Wallace shifts to climb up the canted floor, toward the beeping console, but he stops and winces. He touches his abdomen. His hand comes away from the dark uniform covered in red. A lot of red.

He looks at his hand, then—

BEEP-BEEP-BEEP.

—his attention is drawn upward again.

Grimacing in pain, he begins to angle up toward the beeping console.

### **EXT. ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT – SAME TIME**

The muffled beep-beep-beep fades away as we travel away from the wrecked Alliance patrol boat to:

## **EXT. SERENITY – CONTINUOUS**

The Firefly sits not far away, amid the ruins of Haven. We move inside the ship via the forward viewpoint to:

## **INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME**

Mal paces the bridge. Wash and Zoe are both busily working at their consoles.

ZOE

I've got an arrest report for Tony Zhou on Prospero, but that's it.

WASH

And I've got Mr. Universe on the job.

MAL

(nods)

I got a few more names. Not sure if—

ZOE

Wait. Sir...

(reading from her screen)

"Tony Zhou, fifty-three, was bound by law at oh-seven-thirty today, and charged with the trafficking of illegal goods. A routine cell inspection at on-nine-hundred indicated that he had hanged himself."

(looks up)

"He was pronounced dead at the scene."

MAL

*Cao.*

A moment of cold silence.

WASH

Mal... You should see this.

Mal steps behind Wash and looks at one of the screens in front of him, where a NEWSFEED from the public Cortex plays footage from BOROS.

There's no sound, but it's a visual of a city street. PEOPLE run away as BUILDINGS burn.

Mal looks at Wash, and Wash taps a few keys, shifting the focus of the feed to:

—THE SANCHEZ BROTHERS SPACESHIP REPAIR FACILITY (from "Empty Places") is aflame, with all three of the SANCHEZ BROTHERS visibly dead.

No one on the bridge says a word as the feed play silently.

#### **INT. ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT – BRIDGE – SAME TIME**

BEEP-BEEP-BEEP.

With supreme effort, Wallace drags himself up and over the beeping console.

He lets out a long sigh as he settles in against it, exhausted.

BEEP-BEEP-BEEP.

His eyelids start to flutter, but—

BEEP-BEEP-BEEP.

He looks down at the beeping screen, which announces PROXIMITY ALERT: UNKNOWN VESSEL IN VICINITY, and includes trajectory details on an approaching ship, and notation of NO PULSE BEACON DETECTED.

Wallace taps a few keys, leaving behind bloody fingerprints, and the beeping stops.

BEEP-BEEP—

He hits a few more keys, and information scrolls across the screen, ending on a line of text: UNKNOWN VESSEL IDENTIFIED: FIREFLY CLASS.

#### **EXT. SERENITY – SAME TIME**

Still sitting in the smoking ruin of Haven. Dead silence as we close in on the bridge.

#### **INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE**

Inara has joined them, and the light from a number of SCREENS light their faces.

REVERSE to see: every one of the screens—more than a dozen—is filled with an image of flame and destruction, or simple static. It's a who's who of old allies, and in some cases, there are dead bodies, in others, just destruction.

They include:

—LI CHEN at Whitefall (from "Monsters").

—THE CONSTANTINE REFUELING AND TRADING POST (from "Empty Places").

—A static-filled screen with the name TANAKA tagged on the bottom.

—A field of hardscrabble VEGETABLES. A tag at identifies the location as ACTAEON. Smoke rises over the field as flames move toward the body of a settler—PETER (from “Salvage”)—in the foreground, almost directly under the “camera”.

In the co-pilot’s seat, Zoe scans her screen.

WASH  
(quietly)  
Rich. Ellison. Horowitz. It’s everyone we know.

MAL  
Everyone we’ve ever known.

Inara puts a hand on his shoulder. He reaches up and covers it with his own.

ZOE  
You’re not far from wrong, sir. Still no word from Monty or Hawkins.

MAL  
Hopefully they’re on the move. Safe.

WASH  
Didn’t help Tanaka.

Silence.

ZOE  
I have more.

Three more screens light up.

The camera of one is at an odd angle, and shows a large CAVERN, dwellings carved right into the walls. The floor looks like a small port, primarily filled with Quonset huts. Most of the huts are on fire, and more than a dozen bodies—or parts of bodies—are visible. It looks like the place has been nailed with missiles.

MAL  
Dresden.

ZOE  
(near breaking)  
I’d hoped that old buzzard would’ve gotten out.

INARA  
(softly)  
No.

Mal looks at her.

INARA (cont'd)

No!

She's looking at a screen that shows a shot of an open door. Outside, dust and desert. Inside, a WOMAN and a CHILD (perhaps a year old), both dead and bloody. The title at the bottom of the screen reads HEART OF GOLD: FRONT ENTRANCE SECURITY CAMERA. The woman is PETALINE (from "Heart of Gold").

### **INT. SERENITY – KAYLEE'S BUNK – SAME TIME**

Kaylee sits in front of a portable WAVE MONITOR, speaking to it. She's been crying. A lot.

KAYLEE

So I just want to tell you to be careful.

There's a KNOCK at her door, at the top of her ladder. She taps a button on the Wave monitor and stands as the door opens slowly. Jayne tentatively pokes his head in, looking down.

JAYNE

Um. Hey.

KAYLEE

Everything okay? Cap'n need somethin'?

JAYNE

Damned if I know what's in Mal's head. I just...

(holds out a hand)

I got strawberries.

Which is true. He's holding three STRAWBERRIES.

She motions for him to come down.

KAYLEE

Strawberries! My God!

Jayne drops down the ladder awkwardly, using one hand, protecting the fruit with the other. The room is very tight, and there's barely space for the two of them to stand.

She snatches the strawberries from him and holds them to her nose, inhaling deeply. For a brief moment, all the stress fades away.

Jayne looks around the room, hunched over a bit, all manner of awkward.

JAYNE  
Never been down here before.

Kaylee's not listening. Her eyes are closed, and she nibbles at the tip of the strawberry.

KAYLEE  
Soooo good.

JAYNE  
Uh... yeah.

She puts two of the strawberries on a shelf—saving them for later—and savors the first. She sits back down on the bed, clearing a little bit of room... but still not much. She finishes the strawberry, then looks up at him.

KAYLEE  
Are you okay?

JAYNE  
Was gonna ask you the same.

KAYLEE  
(sighs)  
It just seems like everywhere we go, there's so much death. I want... I feel like it's following us, like we take it with us wherever we go. These was our friends, Jayne! Some of 'em was family! I know it ain't really the Cap'n's fault, but I wish there was somethin' we could...

Jayne just nods. Crosses his arms, stares at the floor. Not much to say to it. A long, not entirely uncomfortable silence between the two of them.

Kaylee turns back to the Wave monitor. She hits a few buttons, and starts speaking again.

KAYLEE  
Tell Momma I love her.  
(barely holding back tears)  
I... I love you, too, Poppa. I hope you're all right. I'll see you both soon.

She reaches to tap a button, but Jayne catches her wrist.

JAYNE  
What're you ruttin' doin', girl?

KAYLEE  
(stunned)  
Sendin' my parents a warning.

JAYNE  
More like sendin' 'em a death warrant. You heard what Inara said about this fella who's after River. He ain't no fool. He knows about your parents, it's already too late, and if he don't, you're just gonna tell him.

He lets her wrist go. Kaylee's crying now, but she shuts off the Wave monitor.

KAYLEE  
But I just... Ain't you worried none 'bout your own family?

JAYNE  
(gruffly)  
Course I am. I'm green over what them <bastards> mighta done t'my kin. But I ain't gonna give 'em no help by pointin' 'em true. All they'll get from me's a bullet in th'eye.

She stands suddenly and moves toward him, crying, hugging him. Jayne holds Kaylee tightly while she cries. And his own eyes mist up a little.

#### **INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME**

Inara stares at the screen. At the image of Petaline and her baby.

INARA  
This is my fault.

Mal turns to her, touches her cheek gently.

MAL  
No, it ain't.

INARA  
Yes, it is!

She smacks his hand away and storms off the bridge.

#### **INT. SERENITY – KAYLEE'S BUNK – SAME TIME**

Jayne's still hugging Kaylee, talking over her head.

JAYNE

Already owe 'em for what they done to the Shepherd.  
One of the finest men I ever known, an' they gutted him  
like a fish an' left him to die. Didn't even have the  
decency to finish the job.

His eyes are hard.

JAYNE (cont'd)

Times like this, I almost understand why Mal hates 'em  
so.

Kaylee backs away from him a little, but they're still holding each other.

KAYLEE

You ain't so different from him as you pretend, y'know.

He takes it for the compliment it's intended as. He smiles a little, through the pain.  
She smiles back.

Then there's an odd moment where they look at each other... differently.

He starts to move his mouth toward hers. She doesn't back away. In fact, she tilts  
her head a little, waiting...

And then the moment is gone. They break from each other, all manner of awkward,  
not looking at each other.

JAYNE

I should...

KAYLEE

Yeah, you should...

Kaylee busies herself while Jayne starts to climb the ladder.

JAYNE

I'm sure your family's okay.

She doesn't look up.

KAYLEE

Yours too.

He looks at her once, then climbs the ladder.

### **INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME**

Wash and Zoe look at Mal, then each other, then back to their screens, trying their best for business as usual.

ZOE  
Bernoulli?

WASH  
(shakes his head)  
Anyone walks away from this, it'll be that snake-charmer.  
He can—

One of the screens displaying static shuts off. Then another. Then ALL of them.

A few seconds of confused silence, then EVERY screen turns back on simultaneously, all of them showing a single face.

THE OPERATIVE.

OPERATIVE  
I'm sorry.

### **EXT. ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT**

Again, we see the exterior of the bridge.

WALLACE (VO)  
(strained)  
—attempt to confirm Serenity visually, but—

### **INT. ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT – BRIDGE – SAME TIME**

Wallace erupts into a fit of wet-sounding coughing. He covers his mouth with his hand, and when he finishes and looks at his hand, he's got a fistful of saliva and blood.

WALLACE (cont'd)  
Seems pretty likely that it'd be Serenity. Lieuten— er,  
Captain Wallace out.  
(beat)  
Send.

The console does nothing.

WALLACE (cont'd)  
Send.

Still nothing.

Wallace leans forward and taps a few keys on the console. No immediate response...

Except a rapidly growing HUM coming from somewhere on the bridge.

Wallace looks around as the sound rises all around him. He taps one of the buttons repeatedly—

And the hum becomes a POP as something goes wrong. Wires all across the bridge spark, and EVERY CONSOLE on the bridge EXPLODES.

### **INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME**

Mal stares back at the multiple, solemn images of the Operative.

MAL  
(uncomprehending)  
You— What?

OPERATIVE  
If your quarry goes to ground, leave no ground to go to.  
You should have taken my offer. Or did you think none of  
this was your fault?

MAL  
I don't murder children.

OPERATIVE  
And as you can see, I do. If I have to. When God wanted  
Pharaoh to release his people from bondage— Do you  
know the story? He didn't ask. He sent his plagues down  
upon Egypt. That's me, Captain. The path to peace is  
paved with corpses. It's always been so.

Mal is floored. He looks left and right to Zoe and Wash. Zoe doesn't react. Wash shrugs, overwhelmed.

MAL  
Why? Do you even know why they sent you?

OPERATIVE  
It's not my place to ask. I believe in something greater  
than myself. A better world. A world without sin.

MAL

So me and mine got to lie down and die so you can live in your better world?

OPERATIVE

I'm not going to live there. How could you think... There's no place for me there, any more than there is for you. Malcolm, I'm a monster. What I do is evil, I've no illusions about it. But it must be done. I live to create a world that could not possibly contain someone like me. Paradox.

MAL

You will never see River Tam. I'm telling you this.

OPERATIVE

Every minute you keep River Tam from me, more people will die.

MAL

Why are you all so afraid of one person's brain?

OPERATIVE

I don't know, nor do I care. That's not my function.

MAL

That's right, I forgot. You're a plague.

OPERATIVE

One last time: If you come peaceably, allowances can be made. I really do believe—

MAL

I don't. Believe. In any damned thing.

OPERATIVE

Then why do you keep fighting?

His image winks out before Mal can think of an answer.

### **INT. SERENITY – INFIRMARY – SAME TIME**

Simon busies himself organizing things, but he's just burning off nervous energy. Inara watches him from the doorway, holding herself tightly.

SIMON

I just feel like such a *wonang fei* <useless loser>.

INARA

Simon, there's nothing you could do.

He stops and looks at her.

SIMON

Exactly.

(beat)

I couldn't help the Shepherd. I couldn't comfort Kaylee.  
All I could do was stand around looking like a— like a  
rutting *hutu dan* <clueless person>!

She lets him vent. He continues to organize his materials, slamming them with frustration.

SIMON (cont'd)

I don't know if I'm even doing the right thing for River. I  
brought her out here thinking I could help her, but I  
wonder if I've done a damned thing for her. It seems like  
all I can do is lurk around this ship like a damned  
*qionguang den* <penniless person> and *daodan* <cause  
trouble>.

More with the slamming.

SIMON (cont'd)

All of this is my fault. If I hadn't gotten River out— If I  
hadn't brought River here...

INARA

You can't think that, Simon—

SIMON

All of this death is because—

He slams a jar into place and it shatters, SLICING his hand.

They both stop and look at it. Simon stands there, staring at his own bleeding hand. It seems he's reached his limit.

Inara moves quietly past him, selecting a sterile cloth and a tube of ointment from the shelves. She begins to clean his hand.

INARA

What's done is done.

She looks very closely at his hand, not making eye contact.

INARA (cont'd)

We all keep secrets. We all have our reasons. You did what you had to do.

Silence, as she finishes cleaning his hand then, starts to bandage it up.

INARA (cont'd)

How is she?

SIMON

River?

(grim laugh)

She's better off than the rest of us. She's asleep.

### **INT. SERENITY – AFT HALL – SAME TIME**

River walks quietly down the hall, and into:

### **INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – CONTINUOUS**

Where she finds Ben sitting alone at the table. The offertory boxes that Jayne took are on one of the counters behind him.

BEN

(looking up)

I shoulda been here. Haven's my home.

RIVER

(shrugs)

You'd be dead. Dead dead dead in your living room.

(beat)

Dead.

BEN

You ain't exactly offerin' comfort, miss.

She sits down across from him. When she speaks, she mimics his cadence.

RIVER

Ain't exactly much comfort to be had today, is there?

She reaches across the table and quietly takes his hand.

RIVER (cont'd)

Take it where you find it. You're still alive. Means Haven is alive. Living. Breathing. You're Haven now.

He nods and bows his head.

### **INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME**

Mal, Zoe, and Wash stare at each other.

WASH

Well, we can't just sit here!

ZOE

He's right, sir. We need to get out. Now.

MAL

And go where? Everyone we know is dead.

ZOE

They know we're here.

WASH

Honey, they know everywhere we could—

MAL

Rustle up everybody. I need some air.

He walks off the bridge without making eye contact.

### **INT. ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT – BRIDGE – SAME TIME**

Wallace is a mess, his face and hands shredded by shattered glass. Smoke and fire come from almost every console.

Wallace looks like he's about to give up, chuck it all in, then he turns and spots a PANEL near the front/bottom of the bridge. The label near it reads EMERGENCY EGRESS – MANUAL ACCESS.

Wallace heaves himself off the smoking, damaged console he's hanging over and drops toward the panel.

### **EXT. HAVEN**

Mal is alone in the dusty space between Serenity and the Alliance patrol boat. He squats on the ground, crouched next to one of the corpses littering the area.

The rest of the crew comes out, moving toward him. The mood varies from tentative to expectant.

A long moment, with just the sound of the wind blowing, then Mal stands.

MAL

Get these bodies together.

ZOE

We got time for gravedigging?

MAL

Zoe, you and Simon drag out the bodies and rope 'em together. Five or six of 'em. I want them laid out on the nose of our ship.

SIMON

Are you insane?

ZOE

(to Simon)

No, no, I understand what he's doing.

(to Mal)

Are you **insane**!?

KAYLEE

What do you mean, the bodies...

MAL

Kaylee, I need you to muck up the reactor core, just enough to leave a trail and make it read like we're flying without containment, not enough to fry us. Maybe Ben can—

KAYLEE

These people are our friends—

MAL

Kaylee, you got a day's worth of work to do and two hours to do it in.

(turns from her)

Jayne, you and Wash hoist up the big stick. Goes right on top. Piece or two of the other ship, graft it on. Any place you can tear hull without inner breach, do that too.

(looking around, to himself)

And we're gonna need paint. We're gonna need red paint.

INARA

(realizing the plan)

*RUNTse de FWOtzoo, ching baoYO wuomun* <Oh merciful Buddha protect us>...

ZOE

Sir. Do you really mean to turn our home into an abomination so we can make a suicidal attempt at passing through Reaver space?

MAL

I mean to live. I mean for us to live. The Alliance won't have that, so we go where they won't follow.

JAYNE

God's balls, Mal! There's no way we're going out there!

And everybody (save River) is talking at once:

SIMON

What is the point of living if you sink to the level of a savage—

WASH

*Juhguh JEE HUA jun kuhPAH* <There's nothing about this plan that isn't horrific>!

BEN

I don't understand—

INARA

Please, we should talk this over—

JAYNE

I ain't takin' orders from a man who has lost his brainstem—

And in the middle of it, Mal pulls his GUN.

They all stop talking. Jayne, the most in his face, steps back, hand on his own weapon.

MAL

This is how it is. Anybody doesn't wanna fly with me anymore, this is your port of harbor. There's a lot of fine ways to die. I'm not waiting for the Alliance to choose mine.

He walks forward, through the group, toward the smashed cockpit of the Alliance patrol boat just as a PANEL is pushed out and falls to the ground. Mal is startled by it.

Wallace, desperate, wounded, and exhausted, pokes his head and shoulders out of the opening created by the fallen panel.

He sees Mal coming and raises his hands in surrender.

Mal SHOOTS him in the head.

Stunned silence.

MAL (cont'd)


I mean to confound these bungers, and take my shot at getting to Miranda, maybe finding out what all I'm dying for. That's the only path I see left and I got to walk it. So I hear any word out of any of you that ain't helping me out or taking your leave I will **shoot you down**.

He grabs Wallace's corpse—drops it as Zoe's feet as he heads back to Serenity.

MAL (cont'd)

Get to work.

River watches him go.



## Act Three

### **EXT. BENA – TRAINING HOUSE – ESTABLISHING**

The Companion training house sits next to a river.

A trio of Alliance WARBIRDS soars overhead.

### **EXT. BENA – TRAINING HOUSE – COURTYARD – CONTINUOUS**

COMMODORE CHIEN watches the warbirds fly past.

The courtyard is a hotbed of organized chaos as dozens of soldiers organize and mobilize. A TROOP TRANSPORT squats in the middle of the courtyard, at the heart of things. That's where Chien is headed.

OPERATIVE (OS)

Commodore! Commodore Chien!

The Operative, in his near-military uniform, strides from the training house.

OPERATIVE (cont'd)

I'll be joining you on the shuttle.

The two men start walking toward the troop transport.

OPERATIVE (cont'd)

I'm sure you would enjoy a proper shakedown of your new command, but I'm afraid we haven't the time. We leave immediately.

CHIEN

Yes, sir. Jenkins and Sabel are en route already.

(beat)

I'm sure Captain Wallace is doing everything in his power to keep them there.

OPERATIVE

Of course. I'm certain he is. He's a good man.

The Operative puts his glasses on.

OPERATIVE (cont'd)

I should have stayed, Commodore.

CHIEN

Sir?

OPERATIVE

(frustrated)

I was there. I can't have missed them by more than a few hours... I should have trusted my instincts.

They walk through the prepping soldiers.

OPERATIVE

Has Harken reported in? Wasn't he in the vicinity?

CHIEN

Still pursuing his target, sir. The smugglers eluded him.

The Operative taps the corner of his glasses and data—REPORTS—starts streaming across the right lens.

OPERATIVE

Contact him immediately. Order him to disengage.

The Operative walks past Chien, heading for the troop transport himself.

OPERATIVE (cont'd)

And get me progress reports from everyone. I want to know where every ship in the quadrant is. All available vessels are to reroute to Haven immediately.

## **EXT. SPACE – NIGHT**

CLOSE ON: THE BODIES as they BURN, flames passing over them and suddenly flickering out as dark falls. They are patches of leathered flesh stretched over bone – monsters, screaming soundlessly in the nothing of space.

We arm past them to the windows of the bridge, looking in at Mal, watching, with Zoe behind and Wash at the helm.

## **INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME**

Mall is still looking forward as he tells Wash:

MAL

Head for Miranda cautious-like. You pick up anything on long range, cut thrust and sidestep it.

WASH

(clearly unhappy)

No, sir.

MAL

What?

WASH

Reavers don't cut thrust 'til they're where they're going, and they never get out of the way. Isn't that us now? Big Bad Wolf?

MAL

That's us.

(to Zoe)

Just holler if you spot anything.

ZOE

Yes, sir.

WASH

(to himself)

Big Bad Wolf...

He leaves the bridge, and as he does, we pull back out to:

## **EXT. SPACE – CONTINUOUS**

We see the whole of Serenity for the first time: it is hardly recognizable.

Charred corpses on the nose, cannon atop with a space-suited corpse draped within, long scars, welded-on parts and war paint... the trail of green light burns out with sporadic bursts of vapor.

It looks, for all the world, like a REAVER SHIP.

### **INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – SAME TIME**

Mal comes down the stairs to the catwalk. He hesitates, then steps into the shuttle.

### **INT. SERENITY – SHUTTLE ONE – CONTINUOUS**

It's dark in here. Mal stands with his back to the door, no light on his face, shaking slightly. Not crying, but overcome.

INARA (OS)

Mal.

He looks up. She's in the corner, only slivers of light cutting across her, looking through that trunk of hers, hands holding a long oilcloth wrapped around something.

MAL

Didn't see you.

INARA

I figured that.

MAL

Anything of use in there?

INARA

Maybe.

She puts it down and crosses to sit on a crate placed where her bed used to be. A BEDROLL lies next to it.

Mal sits by her.

MAL

You don't have to stay in the shuttle, you know. There's empty rooms, if you wanna sleep awhile.

INARA

You think anyone's set to sleep? Simon's portioning out overdoses of morphine, just in case.

MAL  
Cheerful fellow.

He looks around.

MAL (cont'd)  
You ever miss this place?

INARA  
(rueful smile)  
Sometimes... Not so much right now.

He smiles as well – A moment between two weary warriors. She toes the bedroll, looking down.

INARA (cont'd)  
I just didn't feel comfortable anywhere else. It's smaller  
than I remembered.

He doesn't look at her when he asks:

MAL  
Why did you leave?

She does look at him.

INARA  
Why didn't you ask me not to?

A moment, and he rises, quietly flustered.

MAL  
I, uh, I'd better go check on the crew. See how the  
inevitable mutiny is coming along.

INARA  
Yes. Good. Do.

They both want to say more.

Neither does.

He leaves.

## **INT. ALLIANCE FLAGSHIP – BRIDGE**

Commodore Chien stands, hands clasped behind his back, facing the forward viewport.

The bridge is massive, with a crew of a dozen, their stations primarily in sunken areas running on either side of the walkway Chien stands upon, not unlike a Star Destroyer. The décor is pure Alliance, bright lights and sharp edges.

We pull back and out from the viewport to:

### **EXT. SPACE – CONTINUOUS**

We see the flagship from the outside. It's massive and angular, like a deadly metallic shark. The flanks are lined with running lights, brightening the thing like a Christmas tree, as if it's proclaiming that it cares not a whit who sees it coming.

### **EXT. SPACE**

Serenity flies, silent. We close in on:

### **EXT. SERENITY – CONTINUOUS**

Three SPACE-SUITED FIGURES are topside. The largest of them, Jayne, lowers a corpse onto a pile of about a half dozen, nods to the others, then heads back into the ship via the top hatch.

The others (Zoe and Ben) move the bodies and arrange them across the top of the hull, tying them down with cords. These bodies look fresh, and they join the charred corpses already there.

Ben looks green as he picks up a small body. Each time they speak, the com makes a short STATIC sound.

BEN

What about the children?

A beat, as they consider... It's too horrible.

ZOE

Strap 'em to their mothers, if you can tell who's who.  
They'll mostly burn in atmo, like the first batch.

She indicates one of the more charred corpses.

ZOE (cont'd)

Be a kind of pyre for 'em.

BEN

Mounted like trophies... How could the Captain care so little for these people?

ZOE

They're useful.

BEN

This ain't practicality. It's *feng kuáng* <madness>.

ZOE

Little bit, yes. But I been through a war with Mal and seen what it done.

BEN

You was in that same war, right? But you live almost like a person might. You have an actual relationship – a marriage. You didn't turn into some... Gorgon...

ZOE

I'm career army, my whole family is. I was already in when the war started. Captain volunteered. He joined the fight because he believed. He believed his home should be left alone. Believed we would win if we gave our hearts to it, that his generals wouldn't lay down arms while his men were still dying around him... that God would help us in our darkest place.

She cinches a knot tight, moves to the next body.

ZOE (cont'd)

See, that's the difference between Mal and me. All I ever lost was a war.

They are quiet and continue to work.

### **INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY**

The floor of the cargo bay is covered with about a dozen more corpses. One of them is Shepherd Book's.

Kaylee sits on the floor nearby, knees drawn up, looking utterly sick. She looks up as River pads in, looking around at the bodies.

KAYLEE

(quietly)

She's hurtin'.

River turns her full attention to Kaylee.

KAYLEE (cont'd)  
Can't you hear her cryin'? An' it's my fault, too. Cap'n tol'  
me to <mutilate> her engines, but I didn't have to listen.  
'S'my fault.

River sits down next to Kaylee, putting a comforting arm around her as she cries.

#### **INT. SERENITY – COMMON AREA**

Mal and Simon stand in the outside the infirmary.

SIMON  
Going to Miranda is the right thing, Captain. For River.

MAL  
Ain't doin' it 'cause it's the right thing. It's the only thing.

SIMON  
Still... Thank you.

Mal studies Simon for a long moment then nods.

MAL  
I can't be havin' her clawin' nobody up nor openin' no  
airlocks. You be ready when the time comes.

SIMON  
(sighs)  
I'll do my part.

#### **EXT. SPACE**

The Operative's flagship knifes through the black.

The flagship is flanked by a pair of Alliance patrol boats (about half its length).  
Further back, a bulky Alliance cruiser lags slightly behind. Warbirds and gunships  
flit between the larger vessels.

Another patrol boat falls into place, joining the growing fleet.

#### **EXT. SPACE**

Serenity tears on, dressed up like a Reaver ship.

## **INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME**

Wash pilots, Zoe standing behind him, now out of her spacesuit, and looking weary. Mal sits in the co-pilots seat, listless. He stands, paces a few steps, always keeping his eyes forward, then leaves without saying a word.

They watch him go, then:

WASH  
Hate to see him like this.

ZOE  
Seen him worse.

WASH  
Still... Even with all of us around, he's so... alone.

Zoe rubs his shoulders.

ZOE  
If it weren't for you, I'd be just like him.  
(beat)  
I don't know what I'd do without you.

WASH  
Since an average day in our lives features you getting shot at and me sitting here playing with toy dinosaurs, I don't think you're gonna have to worry, hon.

He leans back and looks at her, and his eyes are moist, possibly a little tear in them.

ZOE  
You're my anchor, *bao bei*.

She leans down and kisses his forehead.

## **INT. SERENITY – FOREDECK HALL**

Mal walks down the hall, looking tired, maybe beaten. He enters:

## **INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – CONTINUOUS**

Mal stops dead in his tracks in the doorway, staring into the room.

MAL  
What the—?

CLOSE ON: Jayne's face. He looks like a kid with his hand caught in the cookie jar.

**INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – MOMENTS LATER**

Everyone's assembled in the dining room—

WASH

Well, this is...

KAYLEE

Wow.

SIMON

Quite something.

—standing around the table, which is laden with FRUIT and VEGETABLES of all kinds. Jayne stands off to the side, looking a little embarrassed. The offertory boxes are nearby, both open, with some small bits of greenery stuck to them.

INARA

Where did this all come from?

JAYNE

(looks down)

Shepherd's garden.

No one says anything.

JAYNE (cont'd)

Figgered ain't nobody on Haven gonna need it.

Mal claps him on the shoulder.

MAL

No, you done good.

Kaylee grabs some hard-tack BREAD from a cupboard and adds it to the bounty, while others pass around glasses and begin to sit down.

ZOE

It's what the Shepherd would've wanted, feeding those who need it.

WASH

Even if it might be our last supper.

That sobers everyone a bit. Wash looks around, uncomfortable, since he's not used to that reaction.

Folk start quietly reaching for food.

MAL

Wait.

Mal stands at the head of the table, arms crossed.

MAL (cont'd)

Ain't nobody gonna say grace?

Most of them bow their heads quietly, but no one speaks.

MAL (cont'd)

Ain't nobody gonna say it?

They all look at Mal or one another, confused. Mal sits down. Zoe looks straight at him, a hesitant smile on her lips.

ZOE

I think it's tradition that the captain say grace.

MAL

(clears throat)

Much as I might want t'honor the Shepherd, I think my words is a bit rusty. I think someone else oughta do the deed.

Silence. Heads start turning down to the other end of the table, to Jayne.

Jayne's just about to plop a piece of bread in his mouth when he realizes everyone's looking at him.

JAYNE

What?

It takes him a minute, but he finally gets it. He puts his bread down, closes his eyes, and bows his head.

JAYNE (cont'd)

Lord, um, please bless this bounty we are about to receive. I know you're, uh, busy welcomin' our friends into your arms, but please take the time to make sure you got 'em all. They good and true folk, all, 'specially... 'specially that preacher you done sent us.

Jayne pauses, a bit choked up. There are a few misty eyes around the table.

JAYNE (cont'd)

Busy as y'are today, I wanna let you know you're gonna be even busier when I catch up with the <jackal's gonads> what done this, but for now, just let our friends know that they left behind folk who care about 'em and who'll think on 'em from time to time.

Silence for a moment.

Kaylee, eyes wet, reaches over and puts her hand on Jayne's. Wash dries his eye and offers a tender smile to Zoe, who is likewise misty-eyed. Ben's crying and not bothering to hide it. Simon has his head down, and River smiles and nods as she looks at Jayne. Inara and Mal look at each other.

Jayne picks up the bread.

JAYNE (cont'd)

I'm powerful hungry! Let's eat!

He tears off a big mouthful.

#### **EXT. SPACE ABOVE HAVEN**

The Alliance flagship—and her growing armada of a dozen or so ships—hover in orbit over the brown ball of Haven.

A trio of SHUTTLES descend into the atmosphere, escorted by a pair of GUNSHIPS.

#### **INT. ALLIANCE FLAGSHIP – BRIDGE**

The Operative stares blankly at Chien.

OPERATIVE

Define "disappeared."

Chien just looks uncomfortable.

#### **EXT. SPACE**

Serenity continues her flight through the black.

#### **INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – SAME TIME**

The tone is pensive as the crew picks at their food. No one speaks, and the only sound is the occasional scrape of utensil... and maybe Jayne chewing loudly.

There's still some food left, but not much. And, from the looks of it, other food has been brought out. Some of the cabinet doors are open. It's as if the crew is intent on eating everything left onboard.

We start to pan over the crew, looking at each of them, then midway through, a BLARING ALARM sounds.

Wash and Zoe are out of their seats immediately, Mal and Jayne an instant after.

WASH

We're here.

### **INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – MOMENTS LATER**

Everyone's there, standing or sitting, looking straight at the forward viewport. River is pressed right up against the glass of the viewport.

RIVER

(whispering to herself)

We're coming we're coming we're coming.

### **EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME**

Reverse to see: AN ARMADA...

But not an Alliance one.

REEVERS.

A swarm of them.

The black is filled with what must be hundreds ships in a vague cluster, as Serenity breaks frame headed toward them. Most of them hang still in space. Some move swimmingly about. Some just turn in gentle drifts, as though looking around.

Each is different – each a hodgepodge of pillaged ships, all painted and stripped to look as predatory as possible. They range from tiny warships to whale-like carriers five times Serenity's size. And one or two of them were once Fireflies.

## Act Four

### **INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – CONTINUOUS**

They all wait, tensed up, as they approach the armada...

### **EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME**

And arrive, moving slowly through the ranks of ships.

### **INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME**

Wash steers very carefully. He does not move his hands to get the bead of sweat rolling down his face.

Behind him, Mal and Simon watch River as she stares through the window.

### **EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME**

Serenity passes a large, bizarrely shaped ship, the ship turns, as though watching.

It turns a SPOTLIGHT on Serenity.

### **INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME**

The spotlight stabs in, illuminating everything.

WASH

They're... They're hailing us.

Mal and Zoe exchange a look. Everyone looks uncomfortable.

MAL

See what they have to say.

Wash flips a switch, and a horrible sound comes over the speakers. At first, it sounds like static, but it's really SCREAMS.

KAYLEE

Turn it off.

WASH

I can't.

BEN  
No, really. I think you can.

Wash looks up at Mal.

MAL  
Everyone who don't need to be here, off the bridge. Now.

Kaylee, Inara, and Ben leave the bridge, and Wash adjusts the volume as best he can, but the screams are still there.

River stands by the window, staring unblinkingly at the spotlight.

Mal looks at Zoe and Jayne, then at Simon. Zoe, and Jayne are armed.

Mal walks forward, heading to the avionics bay at the front end of the bridge, where—

River turns away from the light and—

#### **EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME**

The spotlight shuts off. Serenity is past the large ship and in the thick of the armada.

#### **INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME**

River looks back at Mal... then past Mal, up to Simon.

RIVER  
(agitated)  
I'll be good. I promise.

Simon hesitates.

MAL  
(a warning)  
Doctor.

SIMON  
*Eta kooram nah smeck.*

River slides to the ground, asleep. Mal surges forward and catches her.

## **EXT. SPACE**

Serenity plows through the Reaver swarm, leaving behind a sporadic ion trail.

## **INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME**

It's now back to just Wash and Zoe. And the low hum of the screaming.

They sit for a bit without saying anything, then Zoe leans close to Wash.

ZOE

Anything happens to me, I want you to move on.

WASH

Make talking like that a habit, I won't wait for something to happen.

ZOE

I don't want you to get all hollowed out inside, honey.  
Like...

Wash doesn't say anything.

ZOE (cont'd)

Something happens to me, I want you to keep living your life. Find someone else.

No response as Wash flies. Then:

WASH

Couldn't do it, hon. There's no way I'll find someone else with your mix of beauty and lethality.

Wash cracks a smile.

WASH (cont'd)

Well... There's Jayne...

ZOE

Don't joke, Wash. I'm being serious!

WASH

So am I. He's very manly. Fella could lose himself in those big beefy arms of his.

She smacks the back of Wash's head and they both laugh.

## **INT. SERENITY – COMMON AREA**

Mal comes down the stairs into the common area and stops, surprised to see Inara sitting there.

MAL

You're just poppin' up in all manner of unexpected places today, ain't you?

She stands.

INARA

I knew you'd pass through here eventually.

MAL

Lyin' in wait for me, huh? Lookin' for a final grapple 'fore the Reavers do us all in? 'Fraid my rates might be more'n you can afford.

Inara looks like she doesn't know whether to laugh or cry.

INARA

This... This is all my fault.

MAL

Ain't but one man at fault in this. I imagine me an' him might have us a reckoning before long.

INARA

Mal, there are things... When I was at Bena—

MAL

What you done's your business. Don't owe me no truths nor no lies.

INARA

I think you should know—

MAL

I survive that reckoning, which—if I'm bein' truthful, don't seem over likely—we don't die, we can circle back to what I should or shouldn't know concerning your private matters.

He moves in close.

MAL (cont'd)

And if I do die...

Even closer. Romantic tension builds...

MAL (cont'd)  
I promise I will haunt you.

... and deflates.

He walks away, a big exit into THE INFIRMARY – which is empty.

He walks back out, past Inara, toward the cargo bay, smiling awkwardly. She watches him go.

INARA  
(quietly)  
I know.

### **INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY**

Mal walks into the cargo bay. River kneels at Book's head, with Simon standing near her. Jayne is a little further back, among the other bodies, watching and alert.

Simon looks at Mal as he approaches.

SIMON  
She asked to come here.

RIVER  
(looking up)  
It's calming. He's at peace.

She strokes Book's hair, which is out and loose, like a gray-white halo.

RIVER (cont'd)  
Snow on the ground, not the roof. No danger of collapse.  
Light as helium. His brain was fine.

Mal crouches down next to her.

MAL  
'Course it was, darlin'. 'Course it was.

RIVER  
Carried a big bagful of secret presents. Just like Santa Claus.  
(looks at Book's face appraisingly)  
Must be the beard.  
(to Simon)  
Can the three of us have a moment?

Simon looks at Mal, who nods. Simon moves off. Jayne hesitates, then, when Mal nods approval, moves off.

Then it's just Mal and River crouching over Book's body.

RIVER  
Never married. Never had children.  
(beat)  
I won't either.

Mal just watches.

RIVER (cont'd)  
Wanted the best for you. Loved you like a son.  
(a quick, lucid smile)  
Of course, he also cared about Jayne, so there's no  
accounting for taste.

Mal's mouth quirks in a smile. He's about to say something, but River's head snaps up.

RIVER (cont'd)  
We're here.

River stands and walks off toward Simon and Jayne, on the far side of the cargo bay, leaving Mal alone with Book.

MAL  
(to Book)  
I'm gonna make it mean somethin', Shepherd. It ain't  
gonna be for nothin'.

## **EXT. MIRANDA – ESTABLISHING**

Miranda is a planet of blue-green oceans, dark mountains, and swirling clouds. It looks surprisingly Earth-like.

## **EXT. MIRANDA – OCEAN**

Serenity sails over the water.

## **INT. BRIDGE – LATER**

Wash is in the pilot's seat, Ben the co-pilot's.

BEN  
Ain't near as black as I figured a blackrock'd be.

WASH  
Took the words right out of my mouth.

BEN  
Every reading I'm getting says normal. Oceans, land masses... No tectonic instability or radiation...

WASH  
Yeah, but no power, either.

MAL (via com)  
Nothing at all?

WASH  
Wait. Something. Might be a beacon, but its awful weak.

MAL  
Find it.

#### **EXT. SERENITY – LATER**

She sets down. We see nothing of her surroundings as she settles in, but the sun is almost painfully bright.

#### **INT. SERENITY – AIRLOCK**

Mal, Zoe, and Jayne are in their spacesuits, all armed.

WASH (via com)  
This is as close as I can get us, Mal.

MAL  
Good job.

The OUTER AIRLOCK DOOR HISSES as it begins to open.

Mal turns and looks through the window of the closed INNER AIRLOCK DOOR, at the cargo bay floor. Kaylee's prepping the HOVER-MULE, while River and Simon linger nearby. Inara stands over Shepherd Book's body, looking toward the airlock. She looks away when she sees Mal.

Mal smiles at her, then takes a last look at Book's body.

MAL (cont'd)  
(softly to himself)  
Ain't gonna be for nothin'...

He turns away. As the outer airlock door opens, Mal follows Zoe and Jayne into the harsh white light of Miranda.

**BLACKOUT**